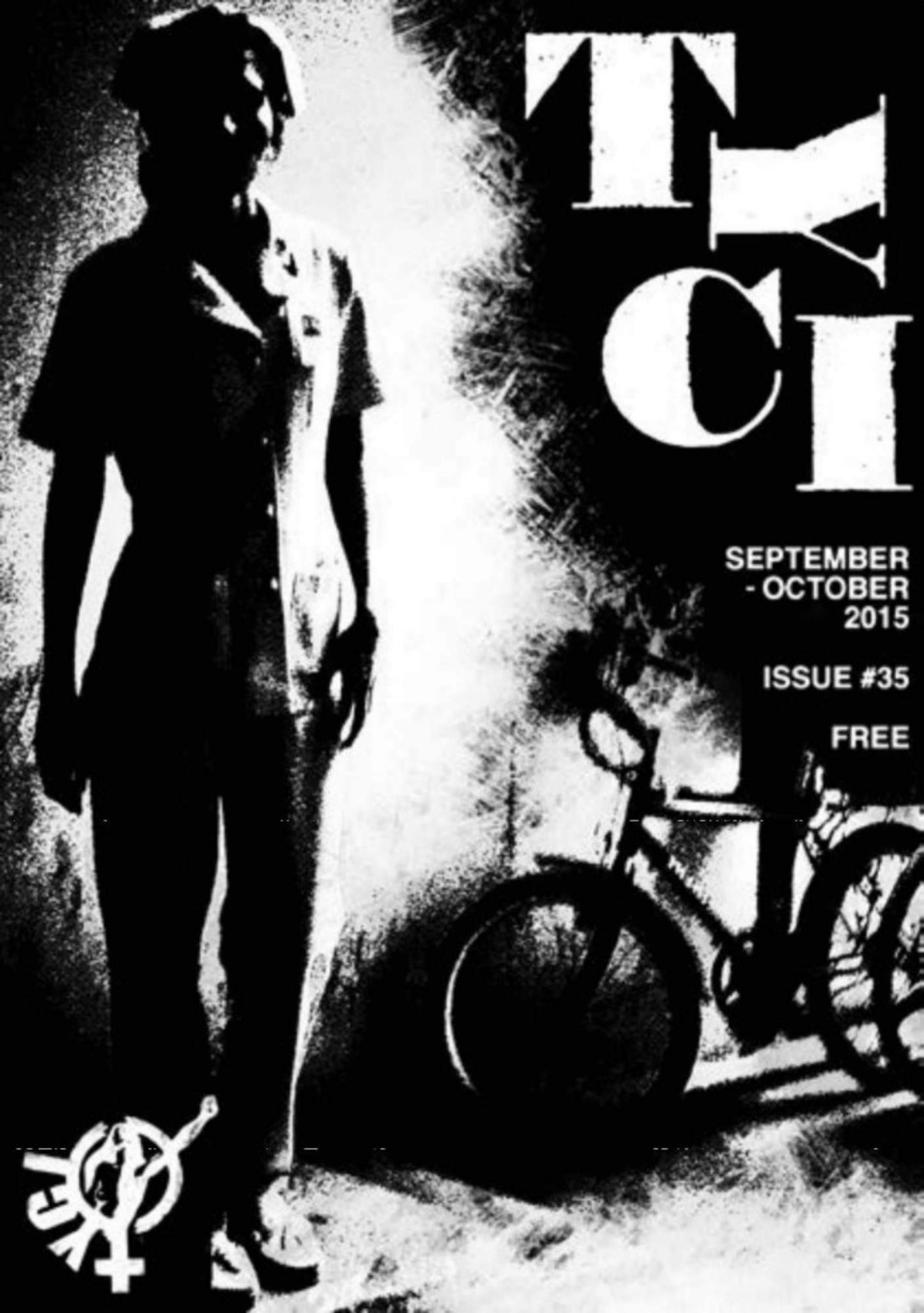

# TFCI

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2015

ISSUE #35

FREE

# ROSE MCDOWALL

*Olivia Carr interviews the ex-Strawberry Switchblade member on the release day of her debut solo album, Cut With The Cake Knife.*

**Cut With The Cake Knife is part of an archival project looking back over your 34 year career. Creatively, is it important for you to look back?**

Cut With The Cake Knife has a lot of Strawberry Switchblade stuff and a lot of stuff I went on to do after which were never released. Looking back is important for me - it's part of who I am…

**Your image is very distinctive. Would you say you use fashion as a means of self-expression?**

When I was young, my mum gave me a mini sewing machine and I made clothes for my dolls before moving on to making clothes for myself. I made gloves, catsuits and learned how to make thigh-length boots out of old pairs of shoes and fabric to match any outfit. I used to make everything myself.

From a very early age it was clear that I was a bit of any individual. I was a little bit of a loner but I always knew what I liked, so I was never lost. I knew who I was. When I was growing up I was really inspired by the 1960s style. I really don't like most '80s fashion. I felt that I was born in the wrong era, and really wished I could have been a teenager in the '60s as I loved the fashion and make-up of the '60s. But then, at exactly the right time, punk happened. It was there for me to lean on and became a way for me to express myself. It was youth culture, freedom, and a license for me to be who I was…

**A lot of the songs on the record have lyrics which are highly personal and emotive. Does song writing represent catharsis for you?**

There's a lot of pain from the past that I'm still letting go of. It's about me dealing with my demons and exploring how to express my emotions in a positive way. Creating music and art is an emotional thing, and it's nice to be able to share emotions through art.

I don't think that enough people show the sadder side of life. Ask anyone if they're OK and they always say yes, because it's seen as polite! But most people have at least some troubles in their life. For me, it's important to explore sadness in order to find balance in life. Basically, I just write melancholy well.

**A recurring theme in your work is loss of friendship. With countless songs about loss of romantic love, do you think that loss of friendship is a theme that most songwriters neglect?**

I do think that's true. On the Strawberry Switchblade album, the song Let Her Go, is about a friend of mine who had a very possessive boyfriend. It was bad - she almost killed herself in order to get away from him. I couldn't see her and I went to her house once to give her a copy of the record. Eventually, she came to the door and it became clear that he had actually locked her in the house and gone to work.

She was my best friend and I couldn't even give her the record I'd wrote about her. I didn't see her for years but I'm in touch with her again which is fantastic. As a kid, I was always happier with a really close best

friend rather than a bunch of friends. I believe that trust in friendship is vital, and it's important to have a close friend who you can trust completely. The honour of friendship is something I really value. Tibet, on the [new] album, is also about my friendship with David Tibet.

**Describe your song writing process.**

Writing can be hard process emotionally, from the writing stage to release. It's a bit of a cliché but it's like having a child, although certainly not as painful! I don't tend to play my stuff all the time. Lots of people like to play their stuff a lot in order to analyse it but I tend to always move on to something else. Of course there's always a running thread through what I do but I never want to dwell in a certain area for too long. At the moment my studio is being set up again and I can't wait so I can get back to recording.

***THIS IS AN EXCERPT. TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE, HEAD TO TYCI.ORG.UK. CUT WITH THE CAKE KNIFE IS OUT NOW ON SACRED BONES / NIGHT SCHOOL.***

# MY PROBLEM WITH 'PLUS-SIZE'

***New TYCI contributor Mina Green writes an opinion piece on society's approach to 'plus size'.***

Ever since the birth of the 'plus-size' woman, the fashion industry has feigned tolerance for women who resemble anything other than a French fry in stilettos (minus the high saturated fat content, obviously). For most people, this has been an encouraging step towards body positivity and a shift in perspective concerning what constitutes an acceptable female body in the Western hemisphere. However, despite the 'body positive' Tess Hollidays of the world being perceived as advocates for change, it is becoming more and more apparent that the fashion industry is actually not accepting of larger women at all and never has been, but is simply humouring them in attempt to make more money.

As the fashion industry is known for thriving on extremes, it's convenient to take advantage of obese women with eating disorders to sell them swimwear and 50's polka dot dresses. This way they'll feel special and spend lots of money. After being abhorred by the industry for so many years it's a Stockholm syndrome situation. These obese plus-size women think they're being celebrated when actually they're being exploited - they've become attached to their oppressors in such a deep way that they think they've been given control over their own freedoms. Of course it is a positive step that plus-size models are gaining attention in the media as it forces people to question the ridiculous body standards the fashion world expects us to uphold. But the problem I have is that many of the most popular plus-size models are obese, not curvy or what I understand as 'plus-size' (larger than the average woman). There is no difference between selling a skirt on a size 22 model than there is on a size 2 model. Both adhere to unhealthy states of the female body, and these unhealthy states are used to grab our attention and make us feel conflicted about our own appearance so that we will buy clothes and make up and handbags to make us feel better.

Now don't get me wrong, I firmly believe in and relish the

diversity of the female form - large boobs, small boobs, big waist, small waist, stretch marks, cellulite, smooth skin, big butts, teeny tiny butts - you name it. But instead of celebrating the diversity of women's bodies and celebrating our differences, the fashion world keeps us focused on super skinny or super fat - there is no middle ground. This encourages women who are already borderline anorexic to keep it up in favour of vanity and global acceptance and it says to obese women 'hey, good work chowing down those cheeseburgers, let's put your heart under even more strain - in the name of fashion, darling!' And for the rest of us, it says you will never be good enough unless you fit into either of these categories.

The fashion industry doesn't want healthy size 12 women modelling their clothes. It doesn't want a broad range of women's bodies from size 2 to 22 rocking the catwalk. It doesn't want gorgeous plus-size or petite women. If that were the case, most of us would feel happier about our appearance. If we're happy, we consume less. If we consume less, the fashion industry makes less money. So their solution is to give us an extreme that we will strive towards and will either never achieve (and feel like a failure as a result, buying more Mac products to cover that up) or achieve too easily by embracing an eating disorder in order to feel 'desirable' and 'fashionable' and 'body positive'. My problem with plus-size is not the women who are attempting to spin a positive yarn out of a previously shitty situation, but the industry that takes advantage of the insecurities of obese women and dresses them up in silky frills and sells them for £300 on ASOS.

When it comes to determining what constitutes body positivity we look to trends such as the

#effyourbeautystandards led by Holliday. This has been viewed by many as a progressive, boundary-crossing, revolutionary move towards changing the way we see the beauty standards of the fashion industry, of the media and of society. But the irony is that the women at the forefront of this trend are making thousands conforming to what the fashion world and the media have already dictated. The media controls everything we consume; it just so happens that they've decided to jump on board the 'plus-size' wagon and feature the extreme side of the movement for their own convenience, by glamourising obesity. These women think that they're making changes, when actually they're blindly supporting a system that has always hated them. It's all very well feeling like a rebel by ending a tweet with #effyourbeautystandards. But we're still going to look up videos on how to contour our face to make it look slimmer, and we're still going to follow the latest fashion trends. So we're not really rebelling or changing anything at all, we've just been given the illusion that we are, so that we feel better about being held captive by social pressure and our own insecurities.

I am aware that challenging elements of the 'body positive plus-size' movement could be perceived as 'fat shaming'. But it's not the plus-size women I have a problem with -I love women in all shapes and sizes - it's the fashion industry encouraging an unhealthy body image of obese women that I don't agree with. It's equally as damaging as encouraging women to lose weight in

order to have self worth. Imagine if the fashion industry decided to treat smokers the same way that they are now treating obese women, and had ad campaigns across the world featuring models lighting up - there would be uproar. So why is it that it's ok to promote another kind of unhealthy behaviour by featuring a twenty stone woman in lingerie?

The fashion industry is manipulating the incredible progress that the 'plus-size' movement has made by putting obese women at the forefront of what it means to be 'plus-size'. It's not cool or trendy for your organs to be shut down, for your heart to fail, or for your joints to be damaged. I believe in the beauty of women's bodies however they appear, but I do not believe the fashion industry is serving the best interests of 'plus-size' women. I believe they are serving themselves.

***AS WITH ALL TYCI ARTICLES, WE ENCOURAGE THOUGHTFUL AND CONSTRUCTIVE DISCUSSION OF THIS ARTICLE AND WOULD ALSO ENCOURAGE READERS TO CHECK OUT OUR MONTHLY FEATURE FROM HALINA RIFAI, MY RAD FAT DIARY.***

# SHANNON & THE CLAMS

*Naina Bhardwaj interviews Shannon ahead of the release of the band's second LP, Gone By Dawn.*

**Tell us about yourselves and the roles you have in the band.**

Cody [Blanchard, singer and guitarist] is a computer whizz, animatronic-circuit bending fuzzy creature making, funny elf musical maniac. Nate [Mayhem, drummer] is a total Craigslist deal master, task completer, instrument fixer, Huckleberry Finn with heart of gold and I am a fluffy, pool and river swimmer, rock jumper dog, squirrel and mouse lover, faerie tale obsessed good time gal that Nate refers to as a comedian... We are basically a bunch of pleasant giggly elves

How did you initially meet?

I met Cody in art school. We had a 4-D arts class together and didn't care for one another. He was always late and rolled his eyes at the teacher a lot. Finally as part of the class we had to make videos and everything in the class was awful except our pieces. We got along great after that.

**How would you describe your music?**

Oldies-inspired garagey pop with fairy tale dust sprinkled on top...

**Do you think that your sound has changed since you first came together?**

Yes, certainly - more refined. We've become better players and stronger singers. I've become more comfortable with song writing and putting in my two cents on recording. I think our records changed a lot when I started to have a larger say in things.

**What do you think makes your new album unique?**

We recorded in a studio for the first time... Cody and I were coming from different places in our lives than ever before as we both were just shocked by major breakups around the same time. We also have a new drummer, Nate, as well as introducing keys, played by Nate and Cody on the record.

**Why should people go out and listen to your music?**

It's different. It's unique although reminiscent and nostalgic. I don't know any other bands that sound like us. We are also not trying to sound a certain way - we are just open and free to what feels natural. Not really worried about fitting in is what has helped us a lot I think.

***THIS IS AN EXCERPT. TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE, HEAD TO TYCI.ORG.UK. FOR MORE ON THE BAND, VISIT SHANNONANDTHECLAMS.COM.***

# JOSEPHINE DECKER

*Naina Bhardwaj interviews the filmmaker about her work.*

**What motivated you to go from being an actress to a filmmaker?**

Well, actually I didn't go from actress to filmmaker. It was the reverse. I was showing a music video at the Sidewalk Film Festival in 2009, and Joe Swanberg had Alexander the Last in the fest. I knew of his films and hadn't seen any yet but we had amazing conversations about working with actresses and being truthful in film and how to be brutally honest with your collaborators…

He asked me to be in Uncle Kent about six months later after we also saw each other at Cucalorus Film Fest… We actually wrote Art History together. Uncle Kent went to Sundance; Art History went to the Berlinale; Auto-Erotic sold to IFC, and suddenly, I was known as an 'actor' although I had made films for ten years before I had ever starred in one. Bi The Way – my feature documentary about bisexuality – had premiered at SXSW in 2008 and aired on MTV's Logo and on Netflix, and I had worked in TV docs and on music videos for years.

**What was the inspiration behind both Butter On The Latch and Thou Wast Mild And Lovely?**

Mild and Lovely was deeply inspired by Steinbeck's East of Eden. When you are reading great literature, it really seeps into you - I need to find another great book. Butter was inspired by the actual Balkan Camp…

**You've previously stated that you approach your work with questions and not answers. How well do you think that this strategy works when conveying messages through the film?**

Embracing the unknown is

an important part of making any art. Reality is not fixed or determined, so we are constantly confronting something new inside ourselves. I think when we make art that reflects that, we are freeing up something in ourselves and others - the freedom to be new, to be unknown. I don't make films to convey messages exactly but to open up some kind of window. If my films have answers, that would probably feel like a bad thing.

**How did you manage to be so successful with such low budgets?**

Well, how do you define success? The films take enormous risks because of their low budgets. I think if I had more money, I would have had to make a more commercial product (because investors / producers would have demanded it). So, in some ways, it's not in spite of low budgets that the films found some audiences but because of them…

**Butter and Mild And Lovely both seem to be loosely structured. Did you have a script or shot list and how much of it was scripted or improvised dialogue?**

Butter was definitely a loose improvisation. I let the actors improvise all the dialogue. Mild And Lovely was scripted and then re-scripted in the edit. I do not feel that that film is loosely structured though I think I understand what you mean. In many films, there is not one word of dialogue that is not some form of exposition. To me, that is a mistake and a way to destroy any character-building.

Transparent is, to me, the best series on television because of its non-expository moments. Jill Soloway really knows how to get you to invest in her characters, and it's by reinventing the way they relate to each other and allowing you to view that relating. I spent about a year editing Mild and Lovely so that the feeling of walking out of the cinema would be one that felt singular, where you felt connected to the characters, exploding with their desires, and utterly like you had gone on the same ride they did.

**Reality seemed to be very ambiguous in these films, was this done intentionally?**

I think reality is ambiguous - isn't it?

**The females in the film seem to have a lot of sexual agency. Was this an issue you deliberately wanted to address?**

Actually, I would say that, as a woman, I just sort of end up writing about and curious about those kinds of characters. For Mild and Lovely, I think that was a part of womanhood I was curious about - that moment when you discover your femininity and wonder how that could be used with / against men… And then, for Butter, I think Sarah and Isolde are just really awesome women who have a lot to say - so that part of the film was just what they were interested to explore. It's amazing to cast powerful women in your films - they bring a ton to the work.

***THIS IS AN EXCERPT. TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE, HEAD TO TYCI.ORG.UK***

# NOT SO...
# SWEET 16

***Kate Bailey writes a special entry for TYCI's nostalgic series offering a bit of advice to our sixteen-year-old selves.***

Hello again,

As you'll begrudgingly come to learn about yourself, rarely are you able to fully dismantle and explain anything in one sitting, and rarely are you able to let that go. But you'll learn that's not a weakness and accept you don't have to accept what you simply do not understand. The reason for the addendum to my previous correspondence regarding the meaning and purpose of your life, is because I have a warning for you. You believe more than anyone that you are always right (*see meticulous dismantling notes above) so, you kind of have to accept all this.

I know right now you don't believe in feminism. You believe it's a bunch of angry lesbians - and you better believe your queer ass is throwing some real shade at you about this. You have to stop and look at the world - you are not treated fairly because of your gender. The media, the 'democracies' and the patriarchy all contribute to a toxic state of inequality between the genders, and you need to start asking questions now. Like, seriously, go look up the definition of feminism and patriarchy like RIGHT NOW.

The questions thing though, I know that's a big ask. Up until now, asking questions has made you annoying. Wanting to talk in depth about things has isolated you from your peers and I know you can't wait to get out of there. It's just for all the sadness you will see, the pain and the stories of those close to you and from around the world, you need to understand you will feel the greatest sadness of all within yourself. It's a healthy disappointment, because one's forced to think about it. I had to understand I was disappointed in myself the most when I compromised my character and my beliefs in order to appease someone else, or avoid a discussion I wasn't socially confident

enough to have. It seems counter-intuitive to your method of survival at this time: work within the system to control the system. You're ambitious and weird, and both traits have intensified. It's been your experience to be ridiculed for speaking about things no one else seems to care about. Ignore that. There are girls and even some guys around you that might also have a change of heart - if they see logic and courage in action. I promise you: there's nothing more formidable than a woman whose logic and courage have combined.

You see, I come to you after nearly two years immersed in understanding all of this (feminism, society's systems). A longer time even following the chain of causation that begins with gender equality and bleeds into the broader concept of human rights in this world. Start asking questions now. Start learning this now. You have no idea how much the world needs you to reject its standard for a better one. You won't know this until you start though. Until you find the people who share this with you. You are right in knowing they are not at Pac Pines High, but they are out there. Also, remember when you were 9 and pissed off that humans had to buy basic health stuff... well, take a look at tampons. Because no, your period does not get easier and definetly not cheaper. There's a reason: find out why. Also, remember how your boss told you you would not get a pay rise because you didn't ask for it properly? Child's play for the workforce. One day, you'll find out a male contractor who performed the same project for a different client for the same company, was paid substantially more than you. Ask why? Because the answer connects you to your gender, and to what you are going to have to face because of it.

Be stronger than those that seek to oppress you, those that tell you don't deserve something or can't do something. Ask them why. I say this with a heavy heart and only in light of retrospect, none of it and none of those people were ever worth your silence. Speak up. Be brave.

Everything you know intuitively is true, just find the facts to support it... and say something.

Love always,

You as a semi-functional adult woman.

***THIS IS AN EXCERPT.***
***TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE, HEAD TO TYCI.ORG.UK***

TYCI'S

# HALLOWE'EN SPECIAL

FOR OUR OCTOBER EVENT, WE'RE DOING A SPECIAL FANCY DRESS EVENT WITH LIVE MUSIC FROM THE VAN T'S AND MORE ACTS SOON TO BE ANNOUNCED.

KEEP AN EYE ON TYCI.ORG.UK FOR DETAILS!

**SATURDAY 17 OCTOBER**
**11.30PM – 3AM**
**STEREO, 22 – 28 RENFIELD LANE, GLASGOW**

**£5 | TICKETS AVAILABLE FROM STEREOCAFEBAR.COM**

Subcity Radio

**The latest episode of the TYCI podcast is online now and can be found at soundcloud.com/tyciblog. Our next Subcity show will be Thursday 15th October, 5 – 7pm. Tune in at subcity.org/shows/tyci.**

TYCI IS A COLLECTIVE RUN BY WOMEN. WE HAVE A WEBSITE WHERE WE WRITE ABOUT THINGS WHICH AFFECT US AND PUT TOGETHER FEATURES ON ART, THEATRE, MUSIC, FILM, POLITICS, CURRENT AFFAIRS AND MOST THINGS IN BETWEEN. WE ALSO TALK ABOUT SIMILAR STUFF ON OUR MONTHLY PODCASTS AND RADIO SHOW ON SUBCITY.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO GET INVOLVED, REPLY TO ANY OF OUR ARTICLES OR JUST GENERALLY SAY HI, HIT US UP ON CONTACT.TYCI@GMAIL.COM OR VISIT TYCI.ORG.UK.

ZINE COVER BY **JEFF SHEINKOPF** (JEFFSHEINKOPF.COM)

EDITED BY **LAUREN MAYBERRY**

EVERYTHING ELSE BY **CECILIA STAMP** (CECILIASTAMP.CO.UK)